

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LISBON 02582 220946Z

22

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6832

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMCONSUL OPORTO

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AMCONSUL PONTA DELGADA

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USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

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E.O. 11652: N/A

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SUBJ: ELECTIONS: CAMPAIGN NEARS END

REF: LISBON 2517 (DTG 191656Z APR 76)

SUMMARY: AS THE FORMAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN PERIOD NEARED ITS
APRIL 23 FINALE, THE POLITICAL PARTIES CONTINUED THEIR
EFFORTS TO CAPTURE THE INTEREST OF AN ELECTORATE DULLED BY
TWO YEARS OF NON-STOP POLITICS.
END SUMMARY.

1. PASSIONS EBB AS CAMPAIGN NEARS END: AS THE FORMAL
ELECTION CAMPAIGN NEARED ITS APRIL 23 FINALE, THE POLITICAL
PARTIES CONTINUED THEIR EFFORTS TO AWAKEN THE INTEREST OF
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PAGE 02 LISBON 02582 220946Z

THE VOTERS. THE PARTIES SPONSORED OVER 600

SEPARATE RALLIES AND OTHER EVENTS THROUGHOUT PORTUGAL
APRIL 20 -- ABOUT AVERAGE FOR A NORMAL CAMPAIGN
WEEKDAY. THE SOCIALISTS, POPULAR DEMOCRATS, AND CDS
PLANNED MAJOR RALLIES IN COMING DAYS TO WIND UP THEIR
CAMPAIGN. THE COMMUNISTS ENDED THEIR EFFORTS IN LISBON
APRIL 20 WITH A RALLY (SEE BELOW) ATTENDED BY APPROXIMATELY
40,000 PEOPLE. THIS WAS THE PCP'S BIGGEST CROWD YET IN
A CAMPAIGN CHARACTERIZED BY PUBLIC RELUCTANCE TO TURN
OUT FOR THE MASS RALLIES SO COMMON IN THE 1975 CONSTITUENT
ASSEMBLY CAMPAIGN. PUBLIC UNRESPONSIVENESS TO CALLS FOR
MASS RALLIES HAS FORCED THE PARTIES TO BE MORE ENERGETIC
AND IMAGINATIVE IN THEIR EFFORTS TO REACH THE VOTERS. THE
MAJOR CANDIDATES HAVE SET A GRUELING PACE IN THEIR PUBLIC
APPEARANCES WHILE THE PARTIES HAVE SPONSORED EVENTS RANGING
FROM THE TRADITIONAL RALLY TO PICNICS, REGIONAL FAIRS, AND
FIREWORKS DISPLAYS. DESPITE THEIR EFFORTS, HOWEVER, THE
PASSIONS WHICH FUELED LAST YEAR'S CAMPAIGN ARE CONSPICUOUSLY
ABSENT; THE PORTUGUESE ELECTORATE, BOMBARDED FOR TWO YEARS
WITH NON-STOP POLITICAL RHETORIC, APPEARED TO HAVE REACHED
THE SATURATION POINT.

2. VOTER TURNOUT: VOTER APATHY RAISED QUESTIONS
AS TO DEGREE OF TURNOUT WHICH MIGHT BE EXPECTED ON
ELECTION DAY. MOST OBSERVERS AGREED ABSTENTIONS
WOULD BE SIGNIFICANTLY HIGHER THAN IN 1975, WHEN AN
IMPRESSIVE 91.7 PERCENT VOTED. THE PPD AND CDS ARE MOST
CONCERNED THAT THESE ABSTENTIONS WILL COME FROM THOSE ON
THE RIGHT ALIENATED BY TWO YEARS OF REVOLUTION. RECENT
REMARKS BY CUNHAL THAT "NO GOOD DEMOCRAT SHOULD ABSTAIN"
DEMONSTRATED THAT LEFT ALSO WAS CONCERNED OVER POSSIBLE
LARGE NO SHOW FIGURE -- AT LEAST AMONG POTENTIAL
"PROGRESSIVE" VOTERS.

3. LITTLE ENCOURAGEMENT FOR VOTING IN BLANK: ANOTHER
PHENOMENON VIRTUALLY ABSENT FROM THIS CAMPAIGN HAS
BEEN PRESSURE FOR VOTING IN BLANK. THIS CONTRASTS SHARPLY
WITH THE 1975 CAMPAIGN, WHEN PROMINENT REVOLUTIONARY
COUNCIL MEMBERS, SUPPORTED BY MANY FAR LEFT GROUPS, MADE
TELEVISED APPEALS TO THE ELECTORATE TO USE BLANK VOTES
AS A DEMONSTRATION OF CONFIDENCE IN THE ARMED FORCES MOVEMENT.
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PAGE 03 LISBON 02582 220946Z

THE ONLY EXCEPTION IS THE RADICAL LEFT REVOLUTIONARY PARTY OF THE
PROLETARIAT (PRP), WHICH IS SHUNNING THE ELECTION AND HAS
MOUNTED AN ELEVENTH HOUR CAMPAIGN IN LISBON AND SETUBAL IN
SUPPORT OF NULL VOTES OR ABSTENTION.

4. RETURNEES HAVE LITTLE IMPACT: ALSO NOTEWORTHY IS THE
LOW IMPACT WHICH THE ESTIMATED 600,000 RETURNEES
FROM THE FORMER AFRICAN COLONIES HAVE HAD ON

THE CAMPAIGN. THE RETURNEES (OF WHOM ONLY 135,000 REGISTERED TO VOTE -- 2 PERCENT OF ALL REGISTERED VOTERS) HAVE DISPLAYED LITTLE COHESIVENESS AS AN INDEPENDENT VOTING BLOC. ONE CDS LEADER RECENTLY NOTED TO EMBOFF THAT RETURNEES, MOSTLY SCATTERED AMONG THIER FAMILIES IN THE RURAL NORTH, HAVE READILY ADOPTED THE POLITICAL VIEW AND PARTY AFFILIATIONS OF THE CONSERVATIVE POPULATION. THE CDS AND PPD HAVE DEVOTED SPECIAL ATTENTION TO THE REFUGEE IN SMALL DISTRICTS OF THE FAR NORTHEAST WHERE THE RETURNEE VOTE IS RELATIVELY IMPORTANT AND IN LISBON AND THE ALGARVE WHERE RETURNEES ARE CONCENTRATED. THE PARTIES HAVE INCLUDED RETURNEES ON THEIR LISTS OF CANDIDATES IN THESE AREAS. THE CDS AND, TO A LESSER DEGREE, THE PPD SHOULD RECEIVE THE BULK OF THE REFUGEE VOTE.

5. PCP STRESSES "SAFE" IMAGE: IN ITS FINAL LISBON CAMPAIGN RALLY APRIL 20, CUNHAL STRESSED ONCE AGAIN THE POINT THAT HAS BECOME THE LEITMOTIF OF THE COMMUNIST ELECTION DRIVE: THE PCP IS THE ONLY "SAFE" LEFT VOTE. PLAYING ON THE SOCIALISTS' REFUSAL TO DISCUSS THEIR POST ELECTION ALLIANCE STRATEGY, THE PCP HAS DOGGEDLY PORTRAYED THE PS AS A RISKY REPOSITORY OF PROGRESSIVE VOTES. THE COMMUNISTS HAVE SIMULTANEOUSLY AGRUED THAT A MASSIVE PCP RETURN WOULD OBLIGE THE PS TO COME TO TERMS WITH THEM AND ENSURE A POST-ELECTION GOVERNMENT OF THE LEFT. IN RECENT DAYS THE PCP HAS AUGMENTED THIS TACTIC BY HIGHLIGHTING STATEMENTS AND APPEARANCES BY ALLEGED PS MEMBERS PLANNING TO CAST PCP VOTES OF CONVENIENCE. SOCIALIST SOURCES INSIST THAT COMMUNIST CLAIMS OF INROADS INTO THE PS ELECTION BASE ARE UNFOUNDED. CARLUCCI

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